

News Roundup

Author : Jeff Welty

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Although the furor about the Casey Anthony trial has generally died down, I am going back to the well one more time, because of [this New York Times](#) story. Briefly, the prosecution presented evidence at trial from the designer of computer forensic software called CacheBack, which the police had used to examine Anthony's computer. He testified that his software found that Anthony had searched the word "chloroform" 84 times. His own concerns about the accuracy of that result led him to redesign the software after he testified, and the redesigned version indicated that Anthony had searched the term just once, and accessed just one website as a result -- a page that contained information about chloroform use in the 1800s. The software designer says that he immediately reported this to the prosecutor and an officer -- while the trial was still ongoing -- but that they sat on the information. Serious stuff, if true.

In other news:

1. Sentencing Law and Policy reports [here](#) on a new empirical study about the effectiveness of different types of defense attorneys. The study, by an analyst with the federal Bureau of Justice Statistics, finds that "private attorneys and public defenders secure similar adjudication and sentencing outcomes for their clients. Defendants with assigned counsel, however, receive less favorable outcomes compared to their counterparts with public defenders."
2. Sentencing Law and policy also [reported recently](#) on another interesting study. The short, and depressing, summary is this: "Black men are half as likely to die at any given time if they're in prison than if they aren't, suggests a new study of North Carolina inmates." The study puts me in mind of [Jamie's recent post](#) about pregnant inmates, which noted that incarcerated pregnant women often have better outcomes than women of similar socioeconomic status who are at liberty.
3. Completing the Sentencing Law and Policy study trifecta is [this post](#), which reports on a recently-completed study of drug courts conducted by the Research Triangle Institute, among others. The study concludes that drug courts reduce recidivism and therefore save money. The *Winston-Salem Journal* notes [here](#) that "[t]his year, North Carolina legislators cut \$2 million in funding for drug treatment courts across the state. . . . Nineteen drug treatment courts are still running in [the state] by using existing staff or taking county money to make up for the loss of state funds, according to the [AOC]. Six courts across the state have closed."
4. Regular readers know that I'm interested in the economics of law schools, a subject that's getting an enormous

amount of attention lately, including from the ABA and from Congress. The *New York Times* just weighed in with [this story](#), captioned "Law School Economics: Ka-Ching!" One of the first paragraphs of the story notes that "[l]egal diplomas have such allure that law schools have been able to jack up tuition four times faster than the soaring cost of college. And many law schools have added students to their incoming classes — a step that, for them, means almost pure profits — even during the worst recession in the legal profession's history."

5. Finally, two stories on the lighter side, both of which are cautionary tales for criminals. First, if you're on probation, [don't make your PO a Facebook friend](#), especially if you're not supposed to be drinking but your page is full of pictures of you with alcohol and comments about getting "smashed." Second, if you're thinking of robbing a smoke shop, convenience store, or the like, *look for one without an attack Chihuahua*. [This](#) 21-second video shows a small but fierce dog chasing off two robbers. (Hat tip: Crime and Consequences.)